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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a state-funded inmate education and re-entry program that provides soft skills training for soon-to-be released offenders. The paper presents preliminary evidence regarding the impact of this training on 14 young male participants. Data came from information prepared by inmates throughout the training program and ethnographic field notes from interviews with inmates following successful completion of the program. The paper begins with four hypotheses on "the African American male problem" (spatial isolation, social capital, search and destroy, and cultural capital/employer preference), assessing their implications for designing interventions to facilitate African American male inmates' re-entry into mainstream society. It describes the North Carolina Inmate Education and Re-Entry Program, profiling its participants, describing preliminary program successes, and examining the pro-social actions inmates have taken in working to achieve their goals. All 14 participants expressed willingness to work in legitimate occupations and rebuild and improve their family lives. Two earned work release privileges and are successfully employed, two were released from prison and have jobs, and another runs a legitimate business from prison. (Contains 91 references.) (SM)

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Building Bridges to the Economic Mainstream for African American Male Ex-Offenders: A Preliminary Assessment of an Inmate Education and Re-entry Program

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I. Introduction & Purpose

Owing to a wide range of "get tough, lock-them-up, and throw away the key" crime control policies enacted at both the federal and state levels of government, research indicates that the U.S. prison population has increased nearly ten fold over the last quarter century. Butterfield (2000, p. 1) reports that the "total number of Americans in all jails and prisons surpassed two million for the first time, reaching 2,026,596 at the end of 1999." According to the U.S. Justice Department's most recent statistics, "the rate of incarceration in prison and jail increased from 1 in every 218 U.S. residents to 1 in every 142" between 1990 and 2000 (Beck and Karberg, 2001, p. 1).

Research indicates that these "get tough" crime control policies have more adversely affected the African American male than other racial or ethnic groups (Lotke, 1998; Duster, 1995; Murdock, 1994; Katz, 2000; Blake and Darling, 1994). As of June 30, 2000, according U.S. Justice Department's most recent report on prison and jail inmates, "13.1% of black non-Hispanic males age 25 to 29 were in prison or jail, compared to 4.1% of Hispanic males and about 1.7% of white males in the same age group" (Beck and Karberg, 2001, p. 9). The report further states that "[a]lthough incarceration rates drop with age, the percentage of black males age 45 to 54 in prison or jail in 2000 was an estimated 3.4%—nearly twice the highest rate (1.9%) among white males (age 30 to 34)" (Beck and Karberg, 2001, p. 10).

One of the unanticipated consequences of the "get tough" on crime policies of the past quarter century, which are largely responsible for the unprecedented rise or increase in the incarcerated population in the U.S., is that over a half million inmates will be leaving prison over the next five years or so, "having completed their sentences or been granted parole" (Kilborn, 2001, p. 1). Commenting on the societal challenges that these ongoing and impending releases pose, Harry Holzer, a labor economist at Georgetown University, states that:

> Many of these guys come out with almost every characteristic that makes employers reluctant to hire. They're not just ex-offenders. They're high school dropouts. They have poor skills and substance-abuse problems (Kilborn, 2001, p. 1).

More specifically, research shows that in the civilian labor market, ex-offenders, especially those who are African American, are perceived to suffer from two types of deficits. Consistent with Holzer's views, they are perceived to lack the "hard" or quantifiable skills (i.e., years of school completed, prior work experience, etc.) skills needed to compete in the 21st century knowledge based-economy (Penny, 2000). They also are perceived to lack the appropriate "soft skills"—those intangible attributes, abilities, skills, and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge (Moss and Tilly, 1996)—that are required to succeed in the contemporary labor market. But like hard, formal, and/or technical skills, it is believed that "soft skills" are also learned skills. Thus, researchers and program administrators alike are now focusing on the 'teachability' of "soft skills" as a way to engender change in the lives of inmates and other socially and economically disadvantaged populations.

In this paper, we describe the structure, organization, and content of a state-funded inmate education and re-entry program, which is designed to provide "soft skills" training for soon-to-be-released offenders from the State of North Carolina's Department of Correction. We also present preliminary evidence regarding the impact of the "soft skills" training on the initial group of fourteen young men who participated in the successful launching of the program. In assessing the impact, we draw upon information prepared by the inmates during the course of the training program and ethnographic field notes compiled in interviews with the inmates following their successful completion of the program.

To set the context for the research, we begin by highlighting the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the "soft skills" training intervention. The program, as we show below, is anchored in research on the steadily deteriorating social and economic status of the African American male over the last quarter century.

II. Background and Context

Over the past decade or so, a number of studies have drawn attention to the fact that the rates of school failure, joblessness, homicide, incarceration, and other anti-social behaviors for the African American male far exceed those for their White, Hispanic, and Asian male counterparts. In fact, the magnitude of the disparities has led some researchers to characterize the African American male as an endangered species (Austin, 1996; Cose, 1995; Gibbs, 1988; McCall, 1995).

Embedded in this research on the "plight" of the African American male are a range of theories, spanning the entire political spectrum, which seek to identify and

explain the underlying causes of the problem. We have culled from this accumulated research four perspectives or hypotheses on "the African American male problem" which we believe must be factored into any intervention designed to facilitate the successful transition of African American male ex-offenders back into mainstream society.

They are: *the spatial isolation hypothesis, the social capital hypothesis, the search and destroy hypothesis, and the cultural capital/employer preference hypothesis.* Below, we discuss each of these hypotheses and assess the implications for the design of intervention programs that seek to facilitate the re-entry of African American male inmates back into mainstream society.

The Spatial Isolation Hypothesis

Based primarily on the works of Wilson (1987, 1996) and Massey and Denton (1993), the *spatial isolation hypothesis* posits that the plight of African American males is intricately linked to their increasing geographical isolation and economic marginalization from mainstream educational and employment opportunities in U.S. society (Massey, 1996). In contrast to the urban Black communities of the 1950s, today's African American males are constrained, for the most part, to inner-city residential areas, variously referred to as "ghetto poor," "hypersegregated," or "concentrated poverty communities," where the structure of opportunity, including access to jobs, has been substantially diminished. In the absence of mainstream employment opportunities, which organize and structure daily life (Wilson, 1996), and given persistent racial discrimination in the metropolitan housing market (Bobo & Zubrinsky, 1996; Massey & Denton, 1993), which constrains access to housing, education, and employment

opportunities in the suburbs and beyond, inner-city communities have become "islands of despair," characterized by high rates of Black male joblessness, crime, and a wide array of other antisocial behaviors (Bernard, 1990; Hagan, 1993; Wilson, 1987; Bobo, Oliver, Johnson, and Valenzuela, 2000).

These conditions, according to Wilson (1996), Massey and Denton (1993), and others (Grant and Johnson, 1995), were created, on the one hand, by the success of anti-discrimination laws enacted during the 1960s and 1970s, which fostered the "selective" out-migration of the Black middle class from inner-city communities, and, on the other, by wholesale changes in the U.S. economy, which have left the most disadvantaged African Americans in general, and African American males in particular, trapped or mired in a state of poverty and severe economic distress (Johnson & Oliver, 1992).

One of the dominant forces contributing to the increasing spatial isolation and economic marginalization of African American males, according to Grant and Johnson (1995), is the U.S. government's efforts, over the last quarter century, to create a deregulated business environment in an effort to increase the competitiveness of U.S. firms in the global marketplace. They note that changes have been made in antitrust laws, and their enforcement, which have resulted in a growing concentration of large, vertically and horizontally integrated firms in key sectors of the economy; that these large conglomerates, due to their economic power and control of markets, have been able to move capital quickly and efficiently to select national and international locations to take advantage of cheap labor (Johnson & Oliver, 1992); and that the federal government, especially during the Bush Administration, may, in fact, have used taxpayers' dollars to

provide incentives for U.S. firms to relocate abroad, especially to Central American countries (Hinds, 1992).

Grant and Johnson (1995) go on to argue that, in order to facilitate the competitiveness of firms remaining in the U.S., the federal government, especially during the Reagan presidency, relaxed environmental regulations and substantially cut both the budgets and the staffs of governmental agencies charged with the enforcement of laws governing workplace health, safety, and compensation, as well as hiring, retention, and promotion practices (Mishel, 1995; Palmer & Sawhill, 1984).

This shift toward a deregulated business environment, according to several researchers, is partially responsible for the wholesale exodus of high-wage, highly unionized, heavy-manufacturing employment from major metropolitan centers in the industrial Northeast and Midwest, where large numbers of Blacks are concentrated, a process referred to as deindustrialization (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Johnson & Oliver, 1992; Wilson, 1987, 1996). Further, they assert that it also precipitated the emergence of new industrial spaces in the suburbs, exurbs, and non-metropolitan areas in this country, as well as the movement of manufacturing activities to Third World countries, a process known as *employment deconcentration*. To support the latter assertion, they cite research which shows that the new industrial spaces that have emerged on the U.S. landscape are typically situated in places where there are few Blacks in the local labor market and few within a reasonable commuting distance (Cole & Deskins, 1987; also see Foust & Mallory, 1993; Labich, 1994; MacCormack, Newman, & Rosenfeld, 1994; Melcher & Kelly, 1994).

Moreover, it has been argued that Black employment losses resulting from massive deindustrialization and manufacturing job deconcentration have not been offset by emerging employment opportunities in the growth sectors of the U.S. economy: advanced services, high technology manufacturing, hospitality services (e.g., hotel, motels, restaurants, etc.), and craft-specialty industries (e.g., garment, furniture, and jewelry making) industries (Scott, 1988). This appears to be the case irrespective of whether this job growth occurs in central cities, where many Blacks are concentrated, or outside of these communities (Johnson & Oliver, 1992; also see Stocking, 1996).

Blacks are substantially disadvantaged in their efforts to secure employment in these growth sectors due to changes in the process by which employers fulfill their labor needs (Waldinger, 1992; Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff, 2000). Employers are shifting to more flexible modes of production, especially those in the craft specialty sector of the economy, in an effort to remain competitive in the global marketplace (Head, 1996). To improve efficiency and to keep labor costs down, Scott (1988) notes that work is either farmed out to contractors and subcontractors, or labor demand is met through informal preferential hiring practices. This flexibility in fulfilling labor needs is made possible by the growing presence of women and immigrants in the U.S. labor market over the last three decades (Hayes, 1996; Johnson, Bienenstock, and Farrell, 1999).

Ethnographic studies indicate that a "code of the streets" has emerged among young African American males who reside in the increasingly hostile and dangerous neighborhoods of the inner city, which are spatially isolated from the economic and education mainstream (Anderson, 1994; Massey, 1995). Research has also affirmed that, in these neighborhoods, the demand for respect through periodic violence is a form of

human capital and that gang membership is a form of social capital—a social support network and source of protection for young African American males (Anderson, 1994; Massey, 1995).

What strategies should be pursued to overcome the spatial isolation that ex-offenders are likely to confront upon their release from prison and to prevent them for re-engaging in the behaviors that undergird the code of the streets? Elsewhere, we have argued that conscious efforts must be undertaken to involve ex-offenders and other jobless African American males in a Gautreaux-type move to opportunity programs to facilitate their access to employment in suburban environments (Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff, 2000). At the same time, efforts also must be undertaken to mend the economic fabric of the spatially isolated, high poverty areas to which many of the soon-to-be released inmates are likely to return. With its emphasis on fostering greater private sector business development in the high poverty areas of major urban centers and on unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in these communities, the Clinton Administration's new markets initiative was a step in the right direction (Cuomo, 1999), one worthy of continued support from the Bush Administration.

Social Capital Hypothesis

Social capital theorists acknowledge that spatial isolation as a function of economic restructuring and racial discrimination in both the labor market and the housing market are critical determinants of joblessness and wage inequality (Johnson and Farrell, 1998). But they are also quick to assert that not all residents of inner-city communities that are geographically isolated from the mainstream are jobless and poor. Likewise, they

note that not all youth who grow up in these environments engage in anti-social or dysfunctional behaviors. In these environments, they argue, some adults manage to find jobs and some youth manage to eschew underclass behaviors despite their residence in a ghetto poor or hyper-segregated neighborhood (Fernandez-Kelly, 1995; Jarrett, 1995; Sullivan, 1989).

The distinguishing factor, according to social capital theorists, is what they term *bridging social networks*, which is defined as ties that connect individuals to a different world of information, resources, and opportunities. Jarrett (1995) has demonstrated how some poor women in the inner city have been able to develop social networks that connect them, and especially their children, with individuals and institutions beyond the boundaries of their neighborhoods. Her research revealed that the children of these women were more likely to engage in "community-bridging" behaviors than the children of their counterparts who were not embedded in bridging social networks. The latter group of youth was more likely to engage in "community-specific" behaviors, that is, anti-social or dysfunctional behaviors consistent with those described in the literature on the urban underclass (Wilson, 1987).

With respect to existing racial disparities in joblessness and earnings, social capital theorists contend that one of the major problems is that African American men, especially those who reside in the inner city, are embedded in homogenous networks which disadvantage them in the labor market (Braddock & McPartland, 1987).[1] If we are

[1] Our survey of participants in a midnight basketball league in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina illustrates the nature and magnitude of the problem that many African American males face (Toler, 1997). When asked during a workshop on networking how many could provide the names of three people who could speak on their behalf about their character, work ethic, and personal attributes that matter to employers, only three of the 80 young men could do so. And when asked to specify his three potential references, one of the young men, who

to improve the economic fortunes of African American men, especially those who have been incarcerated, social capital theorists contend that the key is figuring out how to embed them in heterogeneous networks, that is, networks in which all members differ on such characteristics as place of residence, race, gender, and class.

Embedding African American males in these types of networks would drastically increase their advantageous weak ties, which are partnerships that extend beyond primary networks. Because such ties are characterized by more than one degree of separation, research suggests that they could potentially serve as effective bridges to the economic mainstream (Johnson, Bienenstock, & Farrell, 1999; Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff, 2000).

Dickens (1999) has quantified the effects of such networks: "With one set of assumptions about the job market, the unemployment rate without networks is 6.1 percent. When it is assumed that everyone has five friends or relatives helping them find jobs, the rate drops to 4.3 percent. With ten people in each network, it drops to 2.7 percent" (p. 415). For groups with higher rates of unemployment such as African American males, the impact of networking is even greater. "With assumptions that yield an unemployment rate of 11.4 percent with no networks, introducing a network of five people reduced the unemployment rate to 7.3 percent, and increasing it to ten reduced the rate to 3.8 percent" (Dickens 1999, p. 415). Since newly employed people become part of the network themselves, putting one person to work results in slightly more than one new job created.

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was 23 years old at the time, listed his mother, his high school football coach with whom he had had no contact in five years, and his "running partner," who was another idle minority male participant in the midnight basketball league.

To build bridges to the economic and education mainstream for African American ex-offenders, we need to invest greater resources in programs designed to reseed poor communities with social capital assets that discourage African American males from engaging in crime and other antisocial behaviors and that both encourage them to pursue mainstream avenues of social and economic mobility, which is the goal of the Bush administration's "charitable choice" initiative (Raspberry, 2001), and embed them in diverse social networks. Research indicates that such programs have the potential of returning major dividends—and at a cost far cheaper than the current "get tough" crime policies (Farrell, Johnson, Sapp, et al., 1996; Farrell and Johnson, 1994; Green, 1993; Murphy, 2001).

Search and Destroy Hypothesis

A third school of thought or theme that runs through the extant literature on the "African American male problem" is what we characterize here as the *search and destroy hypothesis*. It posits that the African American male is being systematically targeted for discriminatory treatment and exploitation in at least three domains: education, job training and employment, and especially the criminal justice system (Jackson & Jackson, 1996; Miller, 1996; Shaw, 2000).

With respect to the labor market, Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991), based on their interviews with a sample of Chicago-based employers, show how negative stereotypes of Black men—that they are lazy, inarticulate, and dangerous—are often applied categorically in the recruiting and hiring process (also see Neckerman & Kirschenman, 1990). Their research demonstrates how, irrespective of their

socioeconomic status or their human capital skills, employers oftentimes will use the type of school attended or residential address to screen out or reject African American male job applicants. More recent research, involving interviews with employers in other cities, confirm that these screening procedures are still widely used (Holzer and Ihlanfeldt, 1996; Meiklejohn, 1999; Reingold, Ihlanfeldt, and Neckerman, 1999).

Johnson and Oliver (1992) argue that some of the previously mentioned undeserved stereotypical images that employers hold of Black men—that they are dishonest, lazy, inarticulate, uneducable, untrainable, and dangerous—are themselves a function of the failure of recent social policy (also see Grant & Johnson, 1995). They conclude that urban Black males, in particular, have been negatively impacted by recently implemented policies designed to remedy what is increasingly being perceived as a failing urban public educational system (Oliver & Johnson, 1988). In the process of dissecting and challenging the "crisis" in American public education, they reason that analysts and policy makers have instituted a series of "get tough" education policies, such as tracking by ability group, grade retention, the increasing reliance on standardized tests as the ultimate arbiter of educational success, and extreme disciplinary sanctions, which have educationally disenfranchised large numbers of Black (and other minority) youth (Orfield, 1988).

With respect to tracking, they cite data which indicate that Black youth are underrepresented in the gifted and talented or college-bound tracks and over-represented in the vocational, general education, and special education or non-college-bound tracks (Oliver & Johnson, 1988). Moreover, they note that individuals who have little or no training in child development often do this tracking. In addition to the adverse effects of

tracking, they also show how school officials have tightened requirements for both high school graduation and college admission without paying proper attention to whether qualified teachers and the necessary facilities are available at the primary and secondary public school levels. These developments, they suggest, have been especially problematic for urban Blacks from impoverished backgrounds who attend economically and educationally inferior inner-city schools (Kozol, 1992).

In addition, Oliver and Johnson (1988) cite the increased reliance on standardized general and subject specific tests as yet another barrier, owing to well-established biases that characterize such tests in predicting Black (and other minority) student academic success in higher education. Finally, they draw attention to research which shows that Blacks generally, and Black males specifically, are more likely than their White counterparts to be subjected to extreme disciplinary sanctions, including permanent expulsion from school (also see Kirby, 2001).

A number of studies confirm that these and related "get tough" educational policies are directly responsible for the recent rise in the dropout rate and the decrease in the college-going rate of Black youth, especially Black males. Because many of those who drop out of high school or fail to qualify for admission to college or the university do not possess the skills necessary to compete for jobs in the rapidly growing high-wage sectors of the U.S. economy, Johnson and Oliver (1992) argue that these policies have further exacerbated joblessness among young Black males (also see Kirby, 2001).

Heckman (1994), among others (Fitzgerald & McGregor, 1993), contends that Black males have also been disadvantaged in the labor market by federal employment and job training programs. Fitzgerald and McGregor (1993) specifically note that:

> The limited effectiveness of the JTPA (Job Training and Partnership Act) training is related to the need to meet federal regulations. Job placement assistance is preferred over training, because it is the shortest, and thus the cheapest, service. Fifty percent of enrollees receive placement assistance only. Evidence suggests that the JTPA program creams off the most employable individuals for the most effective types of training in order to meet placement criteria. *Specifically, White males seem to be channeled into on-the-job training programs, which provide the highest reemployment opportunities, while women, minorities, the long-term unemployed, and public assistance recipients are more likely to receive classroom than on-the-job training* [emphasis added] (p. 171).

They also conclude that Black males who successfully complete federal job-training programs "frequently find that there is no demand for their newly acquired skills in the local labor market" (Fitzgerald & McGregor, 1993, p. 171).

However, it is in the area of crime policy that the evidence that Black males are being systematically targeted for discriminatory treatment is strongest and most convincing (Shaw, 2000; Blake and Darling, 1994). Miller (1996) notes that for nearly three decades, States, with the encouragement and support of the federal government, have pursued a policy of resolving the problems of the inner city through the criminal justice system (also see Mauer, 1992; Penny, 2000).

The State of California, once a leader in the rehabilitation of criminals, epitomizes this shift in anticrime policy. In 1977, the California Legislature enacted the Determinant Sentence Law, "which, among other things, embraced punishment (and, explicitly, not rehabilitation) as the purpose of prison, required mandatory prison sentences for many offenses formerly eligible for probation, and dramatically increased the rate at which probation and parole violators were returned to prisons" (Petersilia, 1992). As a consequence of the passage of this law, Petersilia (1992) notes that the California prison population skyrocketed from 22,000 to 106,000 between 1980 and 1992, an increase of

nearly 400 percent. Today, 160,846 individuals are incarcerated in the California Department of Corrections (Eisenman, 2000).

Following California's lead, a number of other States have enacted determinant sentence laws and also have gone on a prison construction binge to accommodate the resulting increase in their prison population. Freeman (1996a) notes that, as a consequence of this "lock them up and throw away the key" approach to the crime problem, State spending on criminal justice has far outstripped total spending and spending on education (Freeman, 1996a). According to Petersilia (1992), over a 5-year period, spending on the criminal justice system increased by 70% in California, approximately four times greater than total State spending, while State spending on education increased by only 10% (Petersilia, 1992).

Several writers have argued that the unprecedented rise in rates of incarceration over the last two decades is not simply a function of rising crime rates. In an empirical study, Arvantes and Asher (1995) demonstrated that extralegal factors, including unemployment, economic inequality, and the presence of minorities, influence "the level of crime control independent of the level of crime" (p. 29). Based on these findings, they conclude that crime control bureaucracies are reacting not only to the incidence of crime but, also, to the threat—real or perceived—of crime. "Without underestimating the serious crime problem in the U.S.," they further conclude, "it is unfortunate that politicians, the media, and the public seem to be unaware that crime is not the sole cause of the incarceration frenzy in this country" (p. 47).

Miller (1996) argues, forcefully and persuasively, that Black males have been affected disproportionately by these get-tough-on-crime policies. To support the claim

that African American males are the targets of a *"search and destroy"* mission by federal, state, and local crime control bureaucracies, Miller presents the following evidence.

Commenting on his experiences as an official in the Massachusetts corrections system, he states:

> I learned very early on that when we got a Black youth, virtually everything—from arrest summaries, to family history, to rap sheets, to psychiatric exams, to "waiver" hearings as to whether or not he would be tried as an adult, to final sentencing—was skewed. If a middle-class White youth was sent to us as "dangerous," he had to have done something very serious indeed. By contrast, the Black teenager was more likely to be dealt with as a stereotype from the moment the handcuffs were first put on—easily and quickly relegated to the "more dangerous" end of the "violent-nonviolent" spectrum, albeit accompanied by an official record meant to validate each of a biased series of decisions (p. 78).

With respect to his views on the juvenile justice system, Miller (1996) noted that:

> [In]...juvenile justice processing...Black teenagers were more likely to be detained, to be handled formally, to be waived to adult court, and to be adjudicated delinquent. If removed from their homes by the court, they were less likely to be placed in the better-staffed and better-run private-group home facilities and more likely to be sent into state reform schools (p. 72).

In reference to the "drug war," Miller (1996) observes that this is where "race falls out of the closet. It was a disaster-in-waiting for African-Americans from the day of its conception" p. 82). He goes on to point out that

> In Baltimore, 11,107 of the 12,965 persons arrested for "drug abuse violations" in 1991 were African American. In Columbus, Ohio, where African-American males made of less than 11% of the population, they comprised over 90% of the drug arrests and were being arrested at 18 times the rate of Whites. In Jacksonville, Florida, 87% of those arrested on drug charges were African American males, even though they comprised only 12% of that county's population. In Minneapolis (where a state court held that punishments mandated by the legislature for possession or sale of

> crack cocaine were racist in their effect), though Black men made up only about 7% of the population, they were being arrested at a ratio of approximately 20:1 as compared to White males (p. 82).

After concluding that "penalties follow the same trend [as arrests]," Miller states:

> In 1991, 90% of the "crack arrests" nationally were of minorities, whereas three-fourths of the arrest for powder cocaine were of Whites. However, sentences for the possession of crack were usually three to four times harsher than those for possession of the same amount of powder cocaine. Blacks were sent to prison in unprecedented numbers and were kept there longer than Whites. Ninety-two percent of all drug possession offenders sentenced to prison in New York were either Black or Hispanic, and 71% in California (p. 82).

He continues with the following analysis of drug treatment:

> [I]n [the] drug war ... African Americans were less likely to be assigned to treatment programs than Whites. In California, for example, whereas 70% of inmates sentenced for drug offenses were Black, two-thirds of the drug-treatment slots went to Whites (p. 83).

Elaborating on this discriminatory treatment, Freeman (1996b) estimates that

> In 1993, about 7 percent of black men over 18 were incarcerated. One black man was in prison for every 11 black men in the workforce; and approximately one was under the supervision of the criminal justice system for every three to four black men in the workforce. Combine race and age and you find that 12 percent of black men age 25-34 were incarcerated (p. 26).

According to the latest statistics released by the Department of Justice, about 13 % of African American men age 25-34 were incarcerated in 2000 (Beck and Karberg, 2001, p. 9).

Other studies have shown that these discriminatory crime policies are part of a larger prison industry complex that has developed in the United States. In an *Atlantic Monthly* article, Schlosser (1998, pp. 4-5) describes the prison-industrial complex as a

> set of bureaucratic, political, and economic interests that encourage increased spending on imprisonment, regardless of the actual need.

> The prison-industrial complex is not a conspiracy, guiding the nation's criminal-justice policy behind closed doors. It is a confluence of special interests that has given prison construction in the United States seemingly unstoppable momentum. It is composed of politicians, both liberal and conservative, who have used the fear of crime to gain votes; impoverished rural areas where prisons have become a cornerstone of economic development; private companies that regard the roughly $35 billion spent each year on corrections not as a burden on American taxpayers but as a lucrative market; and government officials whose fiefdoms have expanded along with the inmate population.

This expansion has been so prolific that it created a need for a Corrections Yellow Pages. This directory lists hundreds of businesses—telephone companies, architecture and construction firms, Wall Street investment banks, plumbing-supply companies, and many others—that have a stake in prison construction. In addition, the prison-industrial complex has spawned the proliferation of a diverse set of prison work programs, which utilize inmate labor to produce a variety of goods and services. In some areas, inmates are required to work for private sector companies at a fraction of the minimum wage. As long as there is a supply of prisoners available to work, the result is big profits for these private sector companies.

In a recent paper focusing on the employment status and labor market experiences of African American males vis-à-vis their non-Hispanic white and Hispanic male counterparts in metropolitan Los Angeles, we found strong empirical support for the *search and destroy hypothesis* (Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff, 2000). Using data from the Los Angeles Survey of Urban Inequality (Johnson, Oliver, and Bobo, 1994), our research revealed that radically different forces affected the employment status of African American males compared to White and Hispanic males in Los Angeles in the early 1990s. African American males were seriously hampered in their efforts to secure jobs in

the local labor market if they had less than a high school education, if they lived in a high poverty area, and if they had a criminal record.

According to our analyses, an African American male in Los Angeles who, in the language of the framers of the *Contract with America* (Gillespie and Schellhaus, 1994), had played by the rules of American society (i.e., graduated from high school, avoided trouble with the law, etc.) had a predicted probability of working of .95 in the early 1990s—about the same as comparably situated white (.96) and Hispanic (.98) males. If that African American male resided in a high-poverty area, his predicted probability of working was .78. If he lived in a high poverty area and had a criminal record, his predicted probability of working was .44. And if he lived in a high poverty area, had a criminal record, and had not graduated from high school, his predicted probability of working was only .07. That is, an African American male saddled with all three of these constraining attributes and average scores on all of the other variables in our model had only a 7% chance of being employed in Los Angeles in 1992 (Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about Here

As Table 1 shows, White males' participation in the Los Angeles labor market in the early 1990s was similarly constrained by these factors, but not nearly as dramatically as was African-American males' participation. For a White male, the predicted probabilities of working were .77 (residence in a high poverty area), .68 (residence in a high poverty area and saddled with a criminal record), and .43 (high poverty area, criminal record, and failure to graduate from high school). That is, a White male saddled with all three of these constraining attributes and average scores on all other independent variables in our model had a 43% chance of being employed in Los Angeles in 1992.

In contrast to African American and White males, the predicted probabilities of working for Hispanic males were not affected by these factors. As Table 1 illustrates, the predicted probabilities remained the same across the three scenarios. If a Hispanic male lived in a high poverty area, had a criminal record, and had less than a high school education—the worst-case scenario—his predicated probability of working in the early 1990s (.97) was roughly the same as it was for his counterpart who did not bear the burden of any of these constraints (.98). This individual's predicted probability of working was also the same as that of his Hispanic male counterpart who lived in a high poverty area (.97) and his counterpart who lived in a high poverty area and had a criminal record (.97). In short, our model suggests that a Hispanic male, irrespective of his place of residence, criminal history, or education level, had a 97% chance or probability of being employed in Los Angeles in 1992.

Because the three groups of males share a common set of characteristics, these data show clearly that race and ethnicity were major considerations in labor recruitment in Los Angeles in the early 1990s. More specifically, the evidence confirms the findings of recent employer surveys, which indicate that in screening for entry-level workers, employers rely primarily on racial or ethnic stereotypes to make inferences about the values, attitudes, and work orientation of job applicants. On the basis of their stereotypes, employers typically reject African American males and aggressively recruit Hispanic males for entry-level positions in their firms (Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff, 2000).

Outside of positive experiences, it may be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to change employers' stereotypical views of African American males in general, and African American ex-offenders in particular. We believe that it is possible, however, to

educate African American male ex-offenders seeking to re-enter mainstream society about the stereotypes and barriers that they will likely face in the labor market and to inculcate in them an understanding of attitudes and behaviors that will be required to overcome those stereotypes and secure employment. These are among the goals of the inmate education and re-entry program.

Cultural Capital/Employer Preference Hypothesis

The final school of thought, gleaned from the extant literature on the African American male problem, is what we term the *cultural capital/employer preference hypothesis*. According to this view, the decline in the economic fortunes of the African American male is not due to the structural constraints advocated by proponents of the spatial isolation hypothesis, the absence of bridging social networks advocated by social capital theorists, or the systematic discrimination advocated by proponents of the search and destroy hypothesis. Rather, the joblessness problem reflects character deficiencies and deviant values of inner-city residents, especially Black males.

Proponents of this view, to whom we shall collectively refer as the *cultural capital* theorists (Bennett, DiIulio, & Walters, 1996; Harrison, 1992; Lemann, 1991; Mead, 1992; Murray, 1995; Sowell, 1981, 1994; The Editors, 1997), argue that inner-city Black males actually choose not to work regularly and that this unwillingness to work is embedded in the nature and culture of the inner city. Negative attitudes toward work, they suggest, are rooted in slavery and the Southern sharecropper system, both of which inculcated in Blacks, "values that are impediments to work, savings, education, and upward mobility" (Harrison, 1992, p. 194).

Cultural capital theorists argue further that neither slavery nor the Southern sharecropper system fostered personal responsibility; under both systems, they contend, "lack of initiative, evasion of work, half done work, unpredictable absenteeism, and abuse of tools and equipment were pervasive," especially under slavery (Sowell, 1981, p. 200). Lemann (1991) indicates that the Blacks who migrated from the South brought these behavioral traits with them to the urban North, where they were once again reinforced by the liberal social welfare policies of the 1960s.

Shaped by this set of forces, inner-city African American males, according to the *cultural capital* theorists, do not have the appropriate set of *cultural capital* attributes—morals, values, attitudes, and behavioral traits—to compete for jobs in the contemporary American labor market. Rather than suffering from material poverty, as proponents of the *spatial isolation* hypothesis contend (Wilson, 1996; Massey, 1996), Bennett et al. (1996, p. 14) conclude that inner-city African American males suffer, primarily, from moral poverty, which they define as follows:

> By "moral poverty" we mean the poverty of being without loving, capable, responsible adults who teach the young right from wrong. It is the poverty of being without parents, guardians, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, clergy, and others who habituate children to feel joy at others' joy; pain at others' pain; satisfaction when you do right; remorse when you do wrong. It is the poverty of growing up in the virtual absence of people who teach these lessons by their own everyday example, and who insist that you follow suit and behave accordingly. In the extreme, it is the poverty of growing up surrounded by deviant, delinquent, and criminal adults in a practically perfect criminogenic environment—that is, an environment that seems almost consciously designed to produce vicious, unrepentant predatory street criminals. (p. 14)

Moral poverty, they and others assert (Bennett et al., 1996; Harrison, 1992; Mead, 1992; Murray, 1984, 1995; Sowell, 1994), is primarily responsible for existing racial

disparities in joblessness and earnings, as well as the sharp increase in out-of-wedlock births, family disruption, long-term welfare dependency, and illegal activities revolving around gangs, drug dealing, and other criminal acts in the African American community (Harrison, 1992; Mead, 1992; Murray, 1984; Sowell, 1994).

Research suggests that, in the labor market, this lack of moral health translates into African American males being perceived as lazy, inarticulate, uneducable, untrainable, and, most importantly, dangerous (Braddock & McPartland, 1987; Culp & Dunson, 1986; Cross, Kenny, Mell, & Zimmerman, 1990; Kirschenman & Neckerman, 1991; Neckerman & Kirschenman, 1990; Turner, Fix, & Struyk, 1991; Meiklejohn, 1999). In an economy where increasing numbers of jobs require direct interface with the public, proponents of this school of thought reason that high rates of joblessness exist among young Black males, in large measure, because most do not possess the *cultural capital* or "soft" skills—values, attitudes, appearance, and behavioral disposition—that are highly valued in the contemporary labor market (Holzer & Ihlanfeldt, 1996; The Editors, 1997).

The U.S. correctional system has attempted to deal with the African American male's "moral poverty" problem by implementing prison work programs, which are supposed to promote better behavior, boost confidence and self esteem, and cultivate useful skills for future employment. Despite these efforts, however, the evidence indicates that most ex-offenders still face major obstacles in their efforts to compete in the civilian labor market, which suggests that there is a serious disconnect between efforts of in-house service providers and the demands of the labor market (Penny, 2000).

The disconnect stems from the fact that little is being done to address their social and mental challenges, and their physical health problems. In fact, research indicates that, with the explosion of the American prison population, the availability of programs that enforce the values of drug abstinence, anger management, psychological health, and high education standards are on the decline in the U.S. correctional system. For example, drug-treatment slots in American prisons have declined by more than half since 1993. As a consequence, only one in ten inmates who need the counseling now have access to it (Schlosser, 1998).

Nor is adequate attention being devoted to the "soft skills" problems of the "hardest to serve" prison population. Recent surveys of employers suggest that African American males, especially those who have been incarcerated, will likely increase their success in the civilian labor market with a higher understanding of "soft skills" etiquette required in the 21st century knowledge-based economy (Moss and Tilley, 1996).

III. North Carolina Inmate Education and Re-entry Program

Close to 150,000 individuals are connected with the North Carolina Department of Correction. As Table 2 shows, the majority of these individuals (73%) are on probation. The next largest group is incarcerated (21%) while the smallest group (2.7%) is on parole. Paralleling national level statistics, roughly half of the North Carolina Department of Correction population is African American. Whites account for 41.2% of the correctional system population. Native Americans, Asians, and other minorities make up the remainder (8.8%). Of those who are incarcerated, 14% have been detained for drug related crimes. Three-quarters of them are African American. According to the

North Carolina prison officials, an estimated 18,000 individuals will be released from the prison system annually over the next four or five years.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The North Carolina Department of Corrections operates a wide array of work, education, chemical dependency, and counseling and treatment programs (Table 3). However, none of the programs offers the kind of soft skills training that prior research suggests will be important for ex-offenders transitioning back into civilian life.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Anatomy of the Intervention

The Inmate Education and Re-entry Program curriculum is designed to facilitate program participants' ability to evaluate their status and well-being through six essential lenses: mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, financial, and sexual. More specifically, it is designed to help participants attain a higher level of maturity, a deeper sense of personal responsibility, higher educational and occupational skills, and greater overall success in life. For some program participants, the curriculum will facilitate acquisition of new and important life skills; for others it will enhance/revive their mastery of the life changing skills that they had previously acquired but that have been dormant of late—owing to their incarceration.

As Table 4 shows, the curriculum is comprised of twenty-six sessions embedded within four training modules. Training sessions involve reflections on assigned readings, role-plays, simulations, lectures, videos, and other group exercises, including discussions about personal life experiences. Keith Harrell's *Attitude is Everything: 10 Life-Changing Steps to Turning Attitude into Action* (Cliff Street Books, 2000) serves as the primary

training guide. It is augmented with assigned readings from texts by Na'im Akbar *(The Community of Self)*, Herbert Boyd *(Brotherman)*, Earl Ofari Hutchinson *(The Mugging of Black America, The Assassination of the Black Male Image, and Black Fatherhood)*, Haki R. Madhubuti *(Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?)*, Don Belton *(Black Men on Masculinity and the American Dream)*, Ernest H. Johnson *(Brothers on the Mend)*, and Carl Upchurch *(Convicted in the Womb)*, as well as a collection of videos, charts, tables, tips, and tools, which are assembled in a multi-volume training manual.

Because the overall goal is to build "bridges" to the economic mainstream for a cadre of ex-offenders, the training is approached in much the same way as a civil engineer would go about building a bridge over land or water. Building upon the principles of civil engineering, the first step in bridge construction is to plant the pegs below the surface, which will serve as the supports for the bridge. This is what is known as "creating the substructure."

The first module focuses on the role "soft skills" play in the labor market. More specifically, this module is designed to increase cultural awareness, to foster understanding of the images that prevail in society about African American men, and to facilitate an appreciation of the need for individual attitude adjustments in order to be successful in life.

The second step in bridge construction is to work above ground or sea level to create the expanse that connects the two sides—what is known as "laying the surface". Thus, module 2 focuses on the tools that are useful in increasing African American men's effectiveness in the world of work, including goal-setting, networking, and interviewing techniques.

The third step in bridge construction is to raise the bridge. Here the civil engineer works against gravity above the surface to fully establish the structure—what is known as "erecting the superstructure." Building upon this notion, module 3 addresses issues related to employment retention. Given the varied, sporadic, or nonexistent work histories of most ex-offenders, a lot works against their ability to retain employment after it is secured. In this module, the focus is on skills that are useful in managing interpersonal difficulties and financial problems, which, in turn, contribute to maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

The final step in bridge construction is to pour the concrete or pavement and to paint the lines, exercising attentiveness to the little touches that uniquely contour each bridge to its surroundings—what is known as "dealing with the details". Thus, module 4 addresses the details of individuals' lives that indirectly impact productivity, including how to effectively manage multiple roles in the home, community, and the society at large.

Insert Table 4 about Here

Through this intervention, ex-offenders are expected to attain a higher level of maturity, responsibility, and greater overall personal and professional success in life. From the outset, they are challenged to understand and develop the ability to "codeswitch," that is, to present themselves and communicate in ways acceptable to many different cultures (Moss and Tilly, 1996). In designing the intervention, we considered this to be the appropriate place to begin since most jobs in the 21st century knowledge-based economy will require direct or indirect interface with the public.

Profile of Program Participants

Fourteen young men participated in the successful launching of the Inmate Education and Re-entry Program. As Table 5 shows, all of them were African American.

Their ages ranged from 19-57 and the median age was 34.5 years old. With regard to reasons for their incarceration, four (29%) are characterized as habitual felons, three (21%) had committed robberies with dangerous weapons, and two (14%) are incarcerated for drug trafficking. The remaining five program participants were incarcerated for common law robbery, second-degree burglary, larceny, first-degree rape, and Assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury (AWDWISI), respectively.

As Table 5 shows, roughly half of the program participants were incarcerated in 1995 or earlier. The other half was sentenced to prison between 1996 and 2000. Half are scheduled for release (via parole or sentence completion) in 2001 or 2002, 29% between 2003 and 2005, and 21 % after 2005.

Insert Table 5 about Here

Preliminary Description of Program Impact

Prior research on the African American male problem suggests that the point of departure for any transformational process to facilitate the successful transition back into mainstream society must begin with a full knowledge of: (1) the neighborhood or community context in which the inmates lived prior to their incarceration; and (2) characteristics—real or perceived—of male masculinity in those environments (Anderson, 1990, 1994; Majors, 1993). More specifically, the intervention must be anchored in an understanding of the attitudes that underlay and guided their behavior prior to their incarceration. It is our contention that then and only then will it be possible to initiate or generate the kinds of attitude adjustments necessary to positively influence their life choices, goals, and actions (Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about Here

In an effort to gain this knowledge or understanding, we asked the program participants to explain the rules governing behavior in their local environments prior to incarceration. Their responses are summarized in Table 6. As you can see, they reflect the types of behaviors described by Anderson (1994) in "Code of the Streets" and by Richard Majors in *Cool Pose* (1993).

Insert Table 6 about Here

The inmates indicated that they lived in neighborhoods in which there was a near constant fear of what some other person might do to them. For this reason, they said that they had to adopt specific behaviors, which served as signals to others that they were not to be challenged. According to the inmates, their status in the neighborhood was determined by the way they dressed and walked, the type of vehicle they drove, the pose they adopted while driving that vehicle (e.g., the gangsta lean), and their willingness to engage in violent acts to maintain their image/status (Table 6).

Further, one's masculinity, the inmates asserted, was determined in part by his ability to hold his liquor and partly by having a pocket full of money, lots of women, and a gun or two. According to the program participants, they also had to demonstrate a willingness to "capitalize on anything" for personal gain, even if that "thing" was illegal (Table 7).

Insert Table 7 about Here

Finally, they indicated that, no matter what happened in the neighborhood, they had to adhere to a "see nothing, say nothing" philosophy, even in instances where there was a loss of life (Table 6). Taken together, these attitudes and behaviors, according to

the program participants, constituted "being hip" in the environments in which they resided prior to their incarceration.

As a consequence of the "code of the streets" to which they adhered, the program participants were forced to acknowledge, however, that their pre-incarceration attitudes and behaviors were not viewed positively by some of their friends and family members. When asked to specify adjectives that would describe how they were perceived, the list included, as Table 8 shows, lazy and worthless, selfish, greedy, directionless, manipulative, shrewd, crazy (out of control), and anti social (not outgoing). Interestingly enough, these are the same adjectives that employers use to describe these individuals (Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991; Moss and Tilly, 1996; Meiklejohn, 1999).

Insert Table 8 about Here

Against this backdrop, we next engaged the program participants in an in depth review, analysis, and evaluation of Keith Harrell's ten-steps for turning attitude into action, which are anchored in the belief that "the most valuable asset you can possess is a positive attitude toward your life" (2000, p. xii). The ten steps are highlighted in Table 9. We also required the program participants to apply the process to their own lives.

Insert Table 9 about Here

What kinds of attitude adjustments were the program participants able to make as consequence of participating in this exercise? Table 10 lists the three new things that each of the program participants indicated that they learned about improving their attitudes. The responses of three of the program participants are highlighted here.

Mr. Harris, who is serving a five year sentence for drug trafficking, indicated that he learned "how my attitude affects who I am," that "the world doesn't revolve around

me," and that I need "to make/keep my attitude under control and not let it control me." Mr. Mathews, who is also serving time for illegal drug transactions, said he learned to "give myself "time" before responding to or reacting to situations," to "be more constructive when dealing with the emotional situations in life," and to "adjust my attitude in different situations." Mr. Bagley, who is an habitual felon, indicated that he learned "the power of attitude and its effect on me and others," "how to take control of my attitude," and to "take the 'bad' out of my attitude."

Insert Table 10 about Here

As a function of their participation in this exercise, what types of choices did the program participants indicate that they were prepared to make in their lives immediately? The answers that they gave are summarized in Table 11.

As you can see, Mr. Jones, who may be released from prison as early as June 2001, indicated he would be more conscious of associates, sticking with "winners." Mr. Matthews vowed not to return to selling drugs, and Mr. Borland said that he would "make sacrifices to avoid setbacks." Mr. Dunn said that he would "watch old behaviors " and Mr. Bagley indicated that he would "become more obsessed with goals." And Mr. Harris, who has become an avowed Christian since his incarceration, indicated that he would "pursue 'purpose' in life by doing whatever it takes to make it."

Insert Table 11 about Here

Once attitude adjustments are made, the next step in the transformation process is goal setting to enhance or improve life outcomes. Below are excerpts from the goals set by selected program participants.

Mr. Rand, who was incarcerated for robbery with a dangerous weapon at age 17, indicated that his goal is to "go back to school and take up some more trades…and to get out and work and keep a job."

Mr. Barbee, who is a 39 year old habitual felon, stated that his goal is

> to be the best husband and stepfather that I can be. But first I have to realize that I'm a five-time loser. And there are not many choices in the work field that I have. But that's not a reason for me to give up on my goal in life. No matter what kind of work I get, I will be the best that I can be on the job. But most of all this program [the soft skills class] that I'm taking will give me all that I need to help me get where I need to be in the work world. This is more like a blessing for me because before I didn't know that there was help like this to stop the revolving door into the system for me.

Mr. Jones, who is 37 years old, is doing time for burglary in the second degree. He stated that

> My goal is first to stay drug free. I have one year on the streets clean from heroin. Being free from that dependence, I now realize that the sky is the limit. When I became free, I used all of that energy in a more positive direction, and it opened a lot of doors.

He goes on to state that:

> My second goal is to reopen my pressure washing business and expand. I am striving for three trucks and a roll back. Also a lot fenced in with a garage with bay doors. Owning [a home]…big enough for my girls and even their kids when and if they ever decide to come back home. Big enough for us all. To give my queen the wedding that she always wanted. Then being able to honeymoon on any island and not be stressed.

His final goal is to:

> To own a customized bus fully loaded so my queen and I can travel the U.S. She loves to travel but hates to drive. This will happen after and while my girls are gone to and in college. Being able to wake up, pack up, and go!

Mr. Sanders, who is incarcerated for common law robbery, indicated that his goal is to

> get out of this situation and go out there and get my family in order. Then I want to get myself used to society, and I want to take over my dad's business so he can sit back and retire. Then when I get that rolling good (sic) I want to see if my son wants to do the right thing [and if so,] I will …give him a portion of the business. Then I want to invest some money in stocks and bonds.

Pro-Social Actions

Following their successful completion of the training, what type(s) of actions have the program participants undertaken in an effort to achieve their goals? Our answer to this question derives from interviews conducted with the inmates over the past two months.

Two of the inmates have been released from prison since the training program ended. One of them, who spent six years in prison for robbery with a dangerous weapon, is scheduled to go to work for Federal Express as soon as the company receives his prison release records from the North Carolina Department of Correction. He secured the job through a cousin, who currently works for Federal Express, and one of his inmate education and re-entry program instructors served as a reference for him.

The other released program participant, who lacks 12 credits from completing his bachelor's degree, has secured employment in the telemarketing division of a commercial cleaning company. He states that the soft skills training program was instrumental in his ability to secure employment and that he applies the skills acquired in the course daily in his $10 per hour job. He indicated further that he is trying to save enough money to return to college to complete his undergraduate degree.

Following successful completion of the soft skills training program, two of the participants were granted work release. Although one is a skilled tradesman in heating and air conditioning, he is currently employed at a Kentucky Fried Chicken near the

correctional facility. When asked about his fast food job, Mr. Matthews indicated that he viewed this job as giving him the credibility with an employer that he will need once he is released from prison, which could be as soon as August 2001.

Another one of the inmates, who owned a pressure washing business prior to his incarceration, has managed to secure three contracts, although he is not scheduled to be released from prison until early 2002. The contract work is being done by other members of his family. Part of the income generated from these contracts goes to support Mr. Jones' children.

Two of the inmates are pursuing their goals of enhancing their hard skills. Mr. Council is enrolled in a course that will hone his skills in bidding, estimating, and managing construction projects. He is also preparing to take the examination to secure a construction license. Similarly, Mr. Rand, the 19 year old who is serving time for robbery with a dangerous weapon, is taking classes in the prison to prepare for the GED examination.

IV. Summary and Conclusions

In this paper we have described the structure and organization of a State-funded inmate education and re-entry program, which is designed to provide "soft skills" training for soon-to-be released African American male offenders from the State of North Carolina Department of Correction. We also presented preliminary evidence regarding the impact of this training on the initial group of 14 Black male program participants. In this assessment, we drew upon the information prepared by the inmates during the course

of the training and inmate interviews. Equally important is the context of Black males that leads them to incarceration.

Anchored in prior research on the plight of the African American male, the Inmate Education and Re-entry Program was designed to enable African American male offenders to examine their pasts, and to take responsibility for their futures. The past neighborhood context of the fourteen inmates closely paralleled the environments described in studies on the urban underclass (e.g., Wilson, 1987). Their neighborhoods and social environments were replete with poverty, dysfunctional families, unemployment, low quality health care, and crime. An adjustment in their attitudes was identified as a primary change that they needed to make in their lives before they re-entered society.

All 14 program participants expressed a strong willingness to work in legitimate occupations and to rebuild and improve their family life. Two of the graduates of the program have subsequently earned work release privileges and are performing well on their jobs. Another two have been released from prison since the program ended. One has been offered employment, and the other is gainfully employed. Still another inmate has re-established a legitimate business from prison, and has his family members providing the services.

What these preliminary results tentatively suggest is that incarcerated African American males who are provided opportunities to re-examine and rehabilitate themselves and their decision-making processes can make the necessary attitude changes to become responsible family members and that they can positively contribute to society. However, we believe that intensive follow-up is needed to insure that these individuals

are not enveloped by the negative attributes of the socially and economically distressed environments that they will reenter. Moreover, the crises confronting contemporary African American males remain, and only broader social and public policies can resolve them.

But, in the short term, initiatives such as the Inmate Education and Re-entry Program can serve as stop-gap measures to facilitate the smooth transition of the more than 18,000 males (nearly 50% of whom are African American) that will be released from North Carolina prisons during each of the next five years (2001-2005). In addition, hundreds of thousands of black males will be released from prisons and jails throughout the nation. Many of these men will be released back into social and neighborhood environments that facilitated their incarceration in the first instance, along with subsequent recidivism. Thus, given the continuing challenges that Black males, in general, and ex-offenders in particular, face in American society, we believe that this initiative will be instrumental in assisting those who have been incarcerated in their societal re-entry and in reducing their rates of recidivism.

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Table 1. Predicted Possibility of Working by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	*Base Case*	*High Poverty Area*	*High Poverty Area & Crime Record*	*High Poverty Area & Crime Record & Low Education*
Black Male*	.95	.78	.44	.07
White Male**	.96	.77	.68	.43
Hispanic Male***	.98	.97	.97	.97

*The base case is a Black male, dark skin tone, not from the 3rd world, documented, not from the South, doesn't live in East or South central LA, never lived in public housing, lived with both parents as a child, is over age 35, has at least a high school education, is not married, is proficient in English, does not have a work-related disability, is not self-employed, has an education bridge, has a gender bridge, has a neighborhood bridge, does not have a race bridge, has institutional ties, has no criminal record, does not live in a high poverty neighborhood, and has experienced some work-related discrimination.

**The base case is a White male, not from the 3rd world, documented, not from the South, doesn't live in East or South central LA, never lived in public housing, lived with both parents as a child, is over age 35, has at least a high school education, is not married, is proficient in English, does not have a work-related disability, is not self-employed, has an education bridge, has a gender bridge, has a neighborhood bridge, does not have a race bridge, has institutional ties, has no criminal record, does not live in a high poverty neighborhood, and has not experienced work-related discrimination.

***The base case is a Hispanic male, light or medium skin tone, from the 3rd world, documented, not from the South, doesn't live in East or South central LA, never lived in public housing, lived with both parents as a child, is under age 35, does not have an education bridge, does not have a gender bridge, has a neighborhood bridge, does not have a race bridge, does not have institutional ties, has no criminal record, does not live in a high poverty neighborhood, and has not experienced some work-related discrimination.

Source: Johnson, Farrell, and Stoloff (2000).

Table 2

Profile of the North Carolina Prison Population				
	Prison	Probation	Parole	Total
All	31,784	109,143	3,964	144,891
White	32.4%	45.1%	37.8%	42.1%
Black	63.0%	47.9%	58.0%	51.5%
Indian	1.8%	7.1%	2.1%	1.7%
Asian	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%
Other	2.6%	4.9%	1.9%	4.3%
Unknown	0.04%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Source: North Carolina Department of Corrections, 2001.				

Table 3

Description of Prison Programs in North Carolina

DOC of NC website last updated, February 14, 1997

I. WORK

A. **Department of Transportation Road Squads**

- Contract between the Dept. of Corrections and the Dept of Transportation
- Requires as many available medium and minimum custody inmates to be employed in the maintenance and construction of roads in North Carolina.

B. **Community Work Program Squads**

- Provides supervised minimum custody inmates for work projects requested by government agencies.
- Projects are usually short term and free of charge to Government agencies

C. **Inmate Construction Program**

- Inmate labor is used to erect security fencing and in the construction of prison facilities. In addition, the inmates learn or sharpen various construction skills.

D. **Work Release**

- Available at the majority of minimum security prisons. Inmates are allowed to leave the prison each day to work and are required to return to the prison when their work is finished.

E. **Correctional Enterprises**

- A self-sustaining industrial program to train inmates as productive workers. Inmate labor produces products and services for sale to tax-supported agencies.
- Industrial partnerships with the private sector are also authorized under the Prison Industry Enhancement Program

II. EDUCATION

(annual education report available at
http://www.doc.state.nc.us/dop/education/index.htm)

A. **JOBSTART**

- A targeted approach to prison-to-work transition planning for a select group of inmates at five units within the North Carolina Division of Prisons.
- Program includes training in five areas: Knowledge and Skill, Necessary Portfolio Information, Community Contacts, Prison Transition Team, Case Management Information. Visit on the web: http://www.doc.state.nc.us/dop/education/jobstart/index.htm

B. **Vocational Rehabilitation**

- Provides vocational training, specialized training, job development/placement, services that support transportation, clothing, etc, supporting counseling and guidance (pre and post incarceration).
- Available to inmates close to release

C. **Academic Education**

- Prepares inmates to read, write, compute, pass the GED test, acquire survival skills, and social skills

D. **Vocational Education**

- Prepares inmates: for employment with job skills training, to increase productivity of pre and post incarceration employment, by increasing their sense of accomplishment and ability

E. **Study Release**

- Allows inmates to participate in unsupervised academic or vocational training programs away from the correctional facility.

III. CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

A. **DART Treatment Program**

- Provides felons with a documented history of drug abuse an initial opportunity to engage in treatment and early recovery

B. **Private Substance Abuse Treatment Centers**

- Treatment provides inmates with drug alcohol problems an opportunity to engage in treatment, recovery and continuing care with a private treatment center

IV. THE INMATE AND THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY

A. **Think Smart**

- Carefully selected and trained minimum custody inmates speak in schools, to civic groups and to other public gatherings relating the personal experiences that led to their confinement

B. **Community Volunteer Program**

- The volunteer program provides an opportunity for inmates to participate in programs that assist in their rehabilitation and return to society as law-abiding citizens. Citizens from the community enter facilities each day as volunteers.

C. **Community Volunteer Leave**

- Provides an opportunity for minimum custody inmates to participate in programs that assist in their rehabilitation and return to society as law-abiding citizens. Citizens from the community enter facilities each day as volunteers.

D. **Family Visit Program**

- Allows eligible inmates in the final stage of imprisonment an opportunity to spend time with family and assist in their adjustment back into society upon release from prison.

E. **Mutual Agreement Parole Program**

- Designed to prepare selected inmates for release through structured activities, scheduled progression in custody levels, participation in community based programs and established parole dates

V. THE INMATE AND THE PRISON COMMUNITY

A. **Unit Orientation**

- Designed to assist the newly arrived inmate in adjusting to the assigned prison.

B. **Case Management**

- Case Management and correctional counseling promotes planned contact and interaction between correctional staff and inmates in order to ensure the most effective use of the department resources during the inmates' imprisonment.

C. **Special Services**

- Promotes the inmate's social adjustment and assist in resolving the inmate's personal or interpersonal problems.
- Legal Issues, crisis intervention, family planning/child care, and special needs all are addressed

VI. COUNSELING AND TREATMENT

A. **Religious Programs**

- Assist inmates in spiritual growth and development and provide an opportunity for inmates to demonstrate faith through practice and participation.
- Pastoral care, religious education/instruction, interfaith worship is also provided

B. **Napoleon Hill Project**

- Rehabilitates prison inmates and reduce recidivism by using a course of study based on developing positive mental attitudes by improving the participants' self-esteem, self-assurance and feeling of self control

C. **Sex Offender Accountability and Responsibility**

- A treatment program for sexual offenders based on the tenets that: 1. deviant sexual behavior is learned, and 2. treatment of sex offenders involves learning appropriate and responsible social and sexual behaviors to substitute for behavior that lead to criminal offense

D. **Dobson Relapse Prevention Program** 3

- Is sponsored by Surry Community College and uses a psycho-educational approach seeking to prevent recurring deviant sexual activity by offenders.

Table 4 THE "SOFT SKILLS" TRAINING SESSION

Module 1: Creating the substructure		
Session Number	**Theme**	**Objectives**
1	Laying the Foundation	To identify training objectives
		To develop training guidelines
		To become familiar with the trainers, their styles, and the materials they will use
2	Know Thy Self: A Brief History of Significant American Males	To document the history of males in American society
		To examine the background and contributions of famous American males.
3	Images Abound: The Social Construction and Marketing of the Contemporary American Male	To e..amine the historical images of American males
		To document the development of male stereotypes
		To detail current examples of the male image created by those within and outside the male gender
4	How High Can You Sky: My Attitude Determines My Altitude	To recognize the importance of attitude in accomplishments
		To define self-esteem
Module 2: Laying the Surface		
5	Goal Setting	To define goal setting
		To understand the importance of goal setting
		To identify keys to goal setting
6	Communication & Credibility	To learn how to communicate
		To identify the different ways of communicating
		To define credibility
7	So That You Know: Effective Listening & Facilitative Feedback	To practice effective listening skills
		To define feedback
8	Assessing Education & Training Background	To complete skill inventories
		To interpret their meanings
9	Where to Look for a Job, What Information to Supply, and What Format to Use	To learn appropriate job search strategies
		To determine appropriate and relevant information to provide on an application or résumé
		To complete a job application and develop a résumé
10	Effective Networking	To define networking
		To identify networking opportunities
		To practice how to network

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11	Keys to Successful Interviewing	To know the different types of interviews
		To learn the appropriate way to respond to questions
		To practice interviewing skills
12	Appropriate Apparel and Appearance	To determine appropriate workplace attire
		To realize what constitutes acceptable workplace appearance
		To learn to tailor dress and appearance to different situations and contexts
13	Manners Matter Much – Etiquette 101	To practice social graces
		To understand what is appropriate workplace conduct
14	Success Planning	To synthesize the concepts from this module
		To formulate a plan of action
		To learn how to prioritize
Module 3: Erecting the Superstructure		
15	There Has to Be a Better Way – Anger Management and Conflict Resolution	To understand the choices available for emotional expression
		To learn to diffuse anger
		To find out how to avoid conflict
16	Stress Management	To recognize potential stressors
		To learn to avoid stress
		To manage stress better
17	Harassment and You	To define harassment
		To identify what constitutes harassment
		To learn appropriate actions to take in response to being harassed
18	Money Management	To identify key concepts related to money management
		To understand how to achieve and/or maintain good credit
Module 4:Dealing with the Details		
19	It's about Politeness not Political Correctness – Keys to Conduct in Various Settings	To develop a personal/ethical code of conduct
		To determine how your personal/ethical code of conduct interfaces with that of others
20	Maneuvering in a Multiracial/ Multiethnic Environment	To define cultural diversity
		To understand the changing local and national demographics
		To understand the importance of coalition building

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21	Being a Man Can Be Hazardous to Your Health	To examine barriers faced by males in the criminal justice and educational systems, the workplace, and other social situations.
		To present coping strategies that will enable males to overcome barriers
22	Protecting Against What You Don't Want & Planning for What You Do	To build a vocabulary related to human reproduction and sexuality
		To learn effective prevention strategies
		To understand the importance of planning for childbearing
23	It's Women Thing: How To Better Understand Male/Female Relationships Through the Stages	To appreciate the power of self-definition
		To identify and understand relationship needs and wants
		To differentiate between masculine and feminine gender attributes
		To examine causes of domestic tension and abuse
24	When You Just Can't/Shouldn't Take It Anymore	To recognize abusive behavior
		To develop coping strategies
		To identify resources to help avoid domestic violence
25	"Where's Daddy?"	To examine and differentiate the difference between "making a baby" and fatherhood
		To discuss roles and responsibilities of today's father
26	Spirit Fall Fresh On Me: In the Presence of a Higher Power	To raise spiritual consciousness
		To identify faith-based organizations as a part of the support system
		To nurture the spiritual self

Source: Urban Investment Strategies Center, Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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Table 5

Profile of Inmate Education and Re-entry Program Participants Durham, North Carolina Correctional Facility			
		No.	**%**
Number of Participants		14	
Race/Ethnicity	All African-American		
Age	Mean		34.3
	Median		34.5
	Range		19-57
Crimes Committed	Habitual Felon	4	29%
	Robbery w/ Dangerous Weapon	3	21%
	Drug Trafficking	2	14%
	Common Law Robbery	1	7%
	Burglary 2d Degree	1	7%
	Larceny	1	7%
	Rape First Degree	1	7%
	AWDWISI	1	7%
Date Admitted	Before 1992	1	7%
	1992-1995	6	43%
	1996-2000	7	50%
Projected Release Date	2001-02	7	50%
	2003-05	4	29%
	After 2005	3	21%
Eligible for Parole	All	4	100%

Table 6

"CODES" OF THE STREETS IDENTIFIED BY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- **See Nothing, Say Nothing**
- **Fear of What a Person Might Do**
- **One Is Not Challenged**
- **Dress**
- **Walking Style**
- **Driving Vehicle and Style**

Table 7

INDICATORS OF MASCULINITY ON THE "STREETS"

- Pocket Full of Money
- "Being Hip"
- Control
- Lots of Women
- Having a Gun or Two
- Commanding Respect
- Holding Your Liquor
- Capitalizing on Anything
- Popularity
- Violent

Table 8
PRE-INCARCERATION VIEWS OF FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TOWARD PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Lazy and Worthless
- Selfish
- Greedy
- Mean
- Sweet and Kind
- Directionless
- Manipulative
- Shrewd
- Crazy (Out of Control)
- Go-Getter (Getting the Money, Making Things Happen)
- Energetic
- Good Paymaster (for Hustling)
- Anti-Social (Not Outgoing), Outside Society, Oppositional
- Prideful

Table 9

Harrell's 10 Steps to Turning Attitude into Action	
Step	**Theme**
1	Understand the Power of Attitude
2	Choose to Take Charge of Your Life
3	Identify through Self-Awareness the Attitudes that Hold You Back or Propel You Forward
4	Reframe Your Bad Attitude
5	Find Your Purpose and Passion
6	Be Pro-Active
7	Discover How to Motivate Yourself
8	Build Supportive Relationships
9	See Change as an Opportunity
10	Leave a Lasting Legacy
Source: Harrell (2000)	

Table 10

Examples of Three New Things Program Participants Learned about Improving Their Attitudes

Mr. Barbee:	Controlling Attitude in a Way that is Helpful
	How Important Attitude Is in Daily Life
	Learning Stages of Attitude Development
Mr. Bagley:	The Power of Attitude and its Effect on Me and Others
	How to Take Control of My Attitude
	Take the "Bad" Out of My Attitude
Mr. Jones:	Attitude Is a Choice!
	My Attitude Is a Reflection of Myself
	That I have Natural Instinct to Negotiate Situations
Mr. Borland:	Attitude Determines Altitude
	Need to Adjust Attitude Each Day
	Need to Have a Positive Attitude in Stressful Situations
Mr. Rand:	To Watch My Attitude
	Good Attitude Will Make You Successful
	Good Attitude Will Make You Feel Good Inward and Outward
Mr. Smith:	Be Rational in Thinking
	Attitude Adjustment

	Learn to Rely on Past Experiences
Mr. Matthews:	Give Myself "Time" before Responding or Reacting to Situations
	Be More Constructive When Dealing With the Emotional Situations in Life
	Adjust My Attitude in Different Situations
Mr. Bullock:	Attitude Is Very Important
	Attitude Is Part of Everyday Life
	Attitude Is Strength That Everyone Can Use to Improve Their Lives
Mr. Harris:	How My Attitude Affects Who I Am
	The World Doesn't Revolve Around Me
	To Make/Keep My Attitude Under Control and Not Let It Control Me
Mr. Council:	To Make Better Choices
	Learn to Deal with Other People
	A Good Attitude Makes Life Better
Mr. Whitted:	Stay Self-Motivated
	Study the Art of Defending Myself Against a Negative Attitude
	Not Being Typical
Mr. Barr:	Attitude Can Be Changed Based on Occasion
	Attitude of Success Will Bring Success and Attitude of Failure Will Bring Failure

One's Attitude Is Visible to Another Person

Mr. Dunn:

Not Being Optimistic Can Be Detrimental to One's Attitude

Be More Action-Oriented Toward My Goals—Do It Rather Than Talk About It

Attitude Can Get You Out of and Into Certain Situations (Good and Bad)

Table 11

Choices Program Participants Made to Change Their Lives

Mr. Bagley:	Become More Obsessed With Goals
Mr. Jones:	Be More Conscious of Associates, etc.; Stick with Winners
Mr. Dunn:	Watch Old Behaviors
Mr. Barbee:	Finish What I Start!
Mr. Borland:	Make Sacrifices to Avoid Setbacks
Mr. Smith:	Get More Things Done: Legal Appeals, Meditation, etc.; Time Management
Mr. Matthews:	Not Return to Selling Drugs
Mr. Bullock:	Stay Focused on Rap Career Until I Make It
Mr. Rand:	Think Positive
Mr. Council:	*Change Attitude!*
Mr. Harris:	Pursue "Purpose" in Life By Doing Whatever It Takes To Make It
Mr. Whitted:	*Spread a Positive Message to Youth*
Mr. Barr:	Reassess Values and Goals

Figure 1: The Inmate Transformation Process